DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 077 487 JC 730 125

TITLE Counseling: Bridging the Gap Between Reality and Expectations. A Report of the National Dissemination Project for the Community Colleges.

INSTITUTION Washington State Board for Community Coll. Education, Seattle. Research and Planning Office.

NOTE 15p.

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29

DESCRIPTORS *Community Colleges; *Counseling Effectiveness; *Counseling Programs; *Counselor Characteristics; *Disadvantaged Youth; Guides; Post Secondary Education

ABSTRACT

Ingredients in a successful community college counseling program are explored, and three exemplary programs are described. The community college counselor must be cognizant of the special needs and problems of minority/disadvantaged students who, generally, come from a poor academic background, need remedial or developmental assistance in language and mathematics skills, lack proper study habits and skills, are poorly motivated in traditional academic areas, lack clearly defined and realistic goals, and need financial assistance. The three exemplary programs contained the following key elements: (1) participation by all elements of the community college population, (2) a well-developed training program, and (3) an evaluative procedure. The programs were conducted by Los Angeles City College, the Vermont Regional Community College Commission, and El Centro Junior College, Dallas, Texas. (DE)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH,
EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

COUNSELING:
BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN REALITY AND EXPECTATIONS

A Report of the
National Dissemination Project
for the Community Colleges

UNIVERSITY OF CALIF.
LOS ANGELES

JUN 28 1973

CLEARINGHOUSE FOR
JUNIOR COLLEGE
INFORMATION

FOREWORD

This report was prepared by the National Dissemination Project to suggest ways in which community college systems might better serve the needs of minority and disadvantaged students through educational support services.

The National Dissemination Project is an outgrowth of ten earlier Office of Economic Opportunity projects undertaken by state community college agencies to develop comprehensive planning capacities to serve the disadvantaged and to provide institutional support in program development. It has become obvious from the high drop out rate alone, which often approaches 90 percent for disadvantaged students compared with a 30 percent attrition rate for other students, that community colleges are not successfully meeting the educational and career needs of disadvantaged students. New approaches and new planning efforts in support services are a critical need.

The lessons learned in the OEO planning projects as well as in other innovative programs and projects across the nation have been assessed by the National Dissemination Project. In total, visits have been made to over 100 community colleges in 16 states, and contacts established with state directors and concerned groups and agencies.

In this report, the important ingredients in a successful counseling program are explored, and three exemplary programs

described. Separate reports have been prepared dealing with goals for educational services and with exemplary recruiting programs.

It is hoped that this report will serve as an introduction and a focus for concern. The National Dissemination Project will continue to provide resource information between now and August 1, 1973, in helping individuals, colleges and systems better serve minority and disadvantaged students. This will be done by providing information, contacts, and assistance in planning for change. Fur further information contact:

Pio J. DeCano
Educational Services Specialist
Research and Planning Office
Washington State Board for
Community College Education
2722 Eastlake Avenue East
Seattle, Washington 98102
Telephone: (206) 464-7081

On their second sally from Don Quijote's abode, Sancho Panza, still enthralled with the prospect of riches and lands Quijote had promised, reminded him once again of the promise of his own island to which Quijote replied:

> I would have you know, my friend Sancho, that knights-errant of long ago were accustomed to make their squires governors of the island or kingdoms they won, and I have resolved not to neglect so praiseworthy a custom. Nay, I wish to surpass them in it, for they sometimes, perhaps even on the majority of occassions, waited 'til their squires were trown old, and then when they were cloyed with service after enduring bad days and worse nights, they conferred upon them some title, such as count or at least marquess, of some valley or more less account.
> ....Do not, however, think this strange, for knights-errant of my kind meet with such extraordinary and unexpected chances that I might easily give you still more than I am promising.

The relationship, between Quijote and Sancho in some ways characterizes the relationship between minority/disadvantaged students and community colleges. Most institutions are sincerely attempting to better meet the <u>expectations</u> of new groups of non-traditional students. But the reality is reflected in a high drop-out rate, which in some areas has reached as high as 90 percent for disadvantaged students. Counseling and related support service programs must help bridge this gap between expectation and reality at both the personal and the institutional level.

Dr. William Moore Jr., in his book, Against the Odds writes:

> There is mounting evidence that in the community college the counselor is the pivotal staff member in the remedial program. Around him revolve the functions of teaching, learning, scheduling, and program planning. He acts as the liaison person between the remedial division or department and other divisions within the institution, and he is often a contact between business, industry and much of the community as a whole.*

The kinds of individuals necessary to perform this vital function are in a sense a special breed, by nature and to some extent by training. They must bridge the gap between the windmill and the giant, people are needed who can relate in a personal way to the minority/disadvantaged student and employers and agencies in the community. Support service programs need people who can be trusted with confidences, who can listen and advise without judging, who can understand where students are coming from--in regard to culture, family, geography, race, peers, etc.

Support service programs need people who are sensitive to the human needs of others--food, clothing, sex, friendship, fear, insecurity, loneliness, etc., and who will not use others in manipulative ways. These individuals must be tremendously resourceful. They need to be familiar with community resources--psychiatric, health, training, food, employment, recreation, housing, drug treatment, cultural activities, transportation, etc.

---

* Dr. William Moore, Jr. Against the Odds. Jossey-Brass, Inc., San Francisco. 1970. p. 86.

These special individuals above all must be warm and honest, the kind that others gravitate toward for personal/emotional reasons.

Counselors must also be knowledgeable about what's happening in education. For education to take place, only two major functional components are necessary: (1) a person who wants to learn--a skill, a language, a model, a way of life, and (2) the skill, the language, etc., to learn. Learning can only take place by doing, and any other learning is "off-the-wall," abstract, meaningless, dead-end. The words or theories may stick in the mind but not for long. Even writing, talking and drawing require activity. There must be some connection between the brain and motor behavior, e.g. wiggling a pen while writing. The wiggling of the pen is the motor activity which makes a thought (a very private process) public.

Counseling, too is an active process, but in counseling it is the function of the counselor to listen to the private, the more personal, the more emotional, the more varied aspects of a student's life. The counselor is interested in, listens for, and helps his client articulate, navigate, and perform in all his/her complexity.

Any counseling program is interested in the "whole person," his fantasies, feelings, thoughts, personal relationships, public relationships, jobs, etc., and has as its goal a more integrated, a "more together" person.

At the individual level, counseling requires a special kind of non-demanding friendship. Most students who seek counseling have been used so much as a functionary by others that they have lost sight of their internal or integral selves. Being used as a functionary, means being valued for something one can do, such as fixing a car, making a sales presentation, etc.

Again, counseling emphasizes the personal, the complex, internal, emotional, mental, physical webbing of a persons organic wholeness. That wholeness may be shaky, the person "strung out," loosely hung together or uptight on the verge of explosion, but all of us have some measure of wholeness. It is the counselor's job, goal, function, responsibility to keep his client together.

Good counselors are, when you boil all the fat away, people who are warm, comfortable, and trustworthy friends--the best of them have seen a lot of life--have done a lot of things, gone through a lot of ups and downs and have come out reasonably whole.

There is a lot of variety in counseling styles--not everybody establishes friendships with the same type of people. But, counselors are usually both good conversationalists and good listeners--some bellicose and crude--others quiet and reserved.

Counseling is a personal function and is a key element in any educational system. Learning is irrelevant unless there is an emphasis on the personal and the integrative. The personal/

integrative function is particularly important to minority/disadvantaged students. Besides needing to learn the necessary skills to compete for employment, many minority/disadvantaged students need help in keeping their psychological/emotional wholeness intact.

Growth, in this sense, is a continual process of learning to meet basic needs in what a disadvantaged student may consider to be a hostile and threatening environment. For the disadvantaged student this growth process is extremely important for "success," however that is measured.

Counselors and individuals in support service programs must be cognizant of the special problems and needs of minority/disadvantaged students. Generally minority/disadvantaged students (1) come from a poor academic background; (2) need a large amount of remedial or developmental assistance in language and mathematics skills; (3) lack proper study habits and skills; (4) are poorly motivated in traditional academic areas; (5) lack clearly-defined and realistic goals; and (6) need financial assistance.

This, then, is the context within which the community college counselor must work. What follows are three exemplary programs in counseling for minority/disadvantaged students. There are, of course, other programs which might have been cited.

However, the following programs to a greater or lesser degree contain these key elements:

1. Participation by all elements of the community college population.

2. A well-developed training program.

3. An evaluative procedure.

Los Angeles City College has developed an excellent example of a training program for peer counselors, recognizing and integrating the following: (1) the need to train individuals at the cognitive and affective levels to function as peer counselors, (2) the need to take into account the attributes of minority/disadvantaged students in training.

Two key assumptions were made regarding the benefits of peer counseling. It was felt that peer counselors would be highly motivated in helping students with their problems, and that a peer counseling program would augment existing student relationships. Both assumptions were validated.

As part of the pre-training, participants were asked to define the various obstacles that could prevent a student from attaining his educational objectives. In addition they were encouraged to suggest possible approaches which might be employed in overcoming these obstacles.

A model for training emerged from these early pre-training sessions, emphasizing both cognitive and affective skills. To acquire needed cognitive skills, trainees were given forty hours of instruction on the institution, its programs, and its structure. To acquire affective skills, much more effort was required, including weekly group seminars, once the peer counseling program began. In effect, the training program consisted of both

pre-service and in-service components.

Typical of the types of issues brought up during the affective training sessions is the following, based on one of four "generalizations."*

Generalization I

The counselee's perception of his own feelings, attitudes, and ideas is more valid than any outside diagnosis can be.

A. Training Objectives Derived from this Genralization:

1. Enable student trainee to develop the kind of peer involvement so that he can establish a growth-relationship between him and his counselee wherein both feel free to talk about their feelings, attitudes, opinions, and ideas.

   Procedure: Trainees are divided into pairs and challenged to establish such a growth-relationship during the training session. In this process the trainees simulate roles of student counselor and counselee while establishing a better relationship between each other.

2. Enable student trainee to be *more aware* of feelings when he talks to counselee--both his own feelings and those of the counselee.

   Procedure: Conduct dramatic role playing episodes which bring out strong feelings. For example: a Black student trainee plays the role of a militant Black who is hostile to a White trainee playing the role of student counselor--and vice-versa. This role playing is taped and played back to the group to ascertain the following answers:

   a. Did student counselor show awareness of the feelings of hostility? How?

   b. Did the student counselor show acceptance of these hostile feelings? How?

   c. Did student counselor show any denial of these hostile feelings? How?

---

* From Urban Community College Project, a report on the Los Angeles City College Peer Counseling Program, Claude Ware, Program Director, February, 1971, pp. 13-14.

d. At the conclusion, what did counselee feel about the student counselor? Why? What did student counselor feel about counselee? Why?

3. Enable the student counselor to take the first step toward *accepting his own feelings* about himself as a person by recognizing as fact that he has such feelings.

   Procedure: Have trainees talk to each other concerning real issues about which they have strong feelings. In this process have trainees demonstrate their *awareness* of real feelings which motivate the verbalization that takes place. Further, have trainees demonstrate acceptance of these feelings without being judgmental.

4. Enable the counselor to *accept the feelings* of the counselee about himself as a person without being accusative or judgmental--simply because these feelings are valid for the counselee's perception of self.

   Procedure: Same as above (3).

In assessment of the training and counseling program, four areas of concern were stressed:

1. Selection - A total institutional commitment is is necessary for a program of this type to be successful. Students, faculty and administrators must be involved in the establishment of criteria, the recognition of need, and the selection process itself.
2. Effective Supervision - A peer-counseling program can only be supervised to the extent that it is integrated into the existing programs, curricula and administrative structure of the institution.

3. Involvement of Existing Counseling Program - Any peer-counseling program in the final analysis depends heavily on the "professional" counseling department (division) for direction and support.

4. Evaluation - This is a problem that many counseling programs per se face. How does one evaluate "personal growth" or the feeling that their "motivation" has improved?

The Vermont Regional Community College Commission has instituted a unique program for older disadvantaged students (35-40). The Brookside Program or "How to Survive if you are Poor" is designed to increase student motivation, improve goal-setting ability, raise student self-confidence and provide students with communications skills through teaching experiences and group counseling.

The structure is relatively informal. Students participate in group sessions Fridays and Saturdays. The initial session is devoted to exploring the participant's attitudes and feelings about education. Discussion takes place in an open supportive atmosphere and individuals share the role as group facilitator. This allows them to gain confidence in leadership roles.

According to a staff member, Ms. Cloe Pitkin, as the sessions progress, students gradually develop topics on which workshops can be held. So far workshops have been held on such topics as child development, Vermont history, philosophy of education--and students are involved in teaching these classes.

The program is structured in the following two stages:

1. Group Counseling, aimed at:
   - -Increased confidence.
   - -Development of leadership skills.
   - -Support in setting educational goals.
2. Developing Workshops, aimed at:
   - -Chance to increase leadership skills.
   - -Development in self-determination of relevant educational subjects.

Project CAN (Career Advancement Now), conducted at El Centro Junior College in Dallas, Texas, was originally a peer counseling program for "super high risk" students--defined as those students who have not completed a high school education--with emphasis upon improving reading and math skills.

The program was similar to that at Los Angeles City College, but with emphasis upon younger students and cooperation with secondary schools. It has been so successful that over a two-year period the number of peer counselors in the program has risen from eight to sixty, and the program has moved from "soft" money and has become institutionalized. Besides the peer counseling function, students are now involved in recruitment, registration, and testing of new students.

A cooperative arrangement has been worked out with two four-year colleges--North and East Texas State Colleges--to insure that the peer counselors in Project CAN will be able to continue in their counseling training. Upon graduation from

El Centro, the peer counselors can feed directly into the counseling programs at the four-year colleges.

The selection of students as peer counselors in Project CAN is usually made with the cooperation of El Centro's Division of Humanities. Students are selected upon the recommendation of instructors from Human Development classes.

CONCLUSIONS

Effective counseling programs for minority/disadvantaged students may employ a wide range of training and counseling techniques and may even be based on different philosophical tenets. However, all truly effective programs address themselves to the critical need to "bridge the gap" between reality and expectations.

There appear to be three critical elements which are highly related to program effectiveness. They include:

1. Total institutional participation. This is important since interdepartmental articulation and cooperation between the various elements of the institutional community provide the program with increased credibility and support.
2. Student input into the decision-making process of the program. Students are the ultimate beneficiaries and their background experience and attitudes must be reflected in the program.
3. An evaluation system. This perhaps is the most difficult aspect to establish in any program. However, some kind of evaluative instrument must be included to insure program accountability.